

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Final - Tennessee vs Michigan

Sunday, March 29, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

**Michigan Wolverines**

**Coach Dusty May**

**Yaxel Lendeborg**

**Will Tschetter**

**Nimari Burnett**

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference

Michigan 95, Tennessee 62

DUSTY MAY: We're extremely proud of our guys, the way they competed against a storied program like Tennessee that's as well-coached as anyone in the country, against a team that has battled all year and really improved as the season has gone on.

But our guys have been up to the challenge, to deliver in the biggest moments all year, and nothing changed tonight.

But just we're all very proud to be a part of this group.

**Q. Yaxel, it looked like they came out physically, got some offensive rebounds early. Talk about how you adapted to that and how big a part Will played.**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: We knew the game of the game was going to be physicality. And they're the No. 1 offensive team in the country for a reason. They showed us in the first four minutes. In the meantime we all regrouped, thought about what we needed to do. That was the game plan all along.

Once we started hitting them back and they stopped getting offensive rebounds, the game definitely started to shift. Will did a great job walling up and getting those loose balls or tipping it out for us, making it easier for all the other guys. So shout-out to Will for his toughness.

**Q. I think a lot of us suspected all year that the Big Ten was the best conference. Now that you have two**



**in the Final Four, is there any vindication knowing you guys did have the toughest path to get here?**

NIMARI BURNETT: Yeah, we've done a good job throughout the course of the Big Ten taking it one game at a time and understanding the opponents we have at hand. It's no surprise to see a few Big Ten teams have success in the Elite Eight, Sweet 16, and now the Final Four. Like Yax said, it's a blessing to be here and also a blessing to be here with some Big Ten teams, as well.

**Q. When you guys flashed the way you did in Vegas and everyone starts talking about this team as a potential Final Four team, what's it like as a coach or what's the challenge as a coach to try to figure out how you take that and extend it all the way out to March and April?**

DUSTY MAY: I think that the most difficult part is that everyone starts getting so much more attention, advice. Literally everything they get more of. It's difficult not to make it about you because the people you're talking to are making it about you, and everyone is having those same things going on.

There's just a lot of distracting information. And if you're not mature and you're not connected as a group and you're not willing to be held accountable by the staff and each other, then it's not going to work. Once it creeps in it's almost impossible to weed it out.

So our guys never let it in. Trust me, they all had different fires that were ignited by our people and they stayed the course and stayed about each other. And that's ultimately why we're here. These guys all -- you guys see it -- we weren't a super team, but these guys became super teammates.

**Q. For Will and Nimari, you were on the team a couple years ago that lost 24 games. Talk about the journey going from there to here and did you ever imagine it would be like this?**

WILL TSCHETTER: Man, I just think it's obviously such a blessing to be surrounded by such great people, heading it off with Coach May bringing in and surrounding the program with great mentors and great coaches and then



great players.

It's easy to be successful when you're surrounded by great people.

NIMARI BURNETT: Will put it perfectly. I agree.

**Q. For Yaxel, just that Michigan crowd tonight, was this something you envisioned when you wanted to get the No. 1 seed in the Midwest? Talk about what that felt like in this game today.**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: It felt amazing. This whole tournament felt like a home game no matter where we were. We have a lot of Michigan fans everywhere in the world that are the best fans I've ever been a part of. They really give us energy and life, and they make us want to die on the floor for those guys, make an extra play on defense or offense, whatever we want to do, just because of how much support and love they've been showing us all year.

There's nothing we can't do with the support we have behind us.

**Q. Coach May, can you put into words what it means to make the Final Four with this group and how complimentary you've been of their resilience?**

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, this was obviously one of the goals because of the talent we had in our locker room. There's a slippery slope of being happy and content that we're there, but also knowing you still have work to do for us to accomplish what could be -- our ultimate goal is to be playing on Monday.

We have a sign in our locker room that says "April habits." And from day one, we've challenged these guys to develop championship-level habits that would allow us to win a Big Ten championship, and would also allow us to turn the calendar from March to April. And now we've put ourselves in position to do that.

Tonight, tomorrow will be all about getting better. And these guys have all improved so much as individuals because of the work they put into it, and they're intentional with everything they do every single day and they've really helped each other.

**Q. For Yaxel and the players, you guys have been unabashed about what you wanted to do, where you plan to go. Now that you're one step away and you're in the Final Four, does the moment meet what you thought it would meet?**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: Absolutely. When this group got

together, just like Coach was saying, we all wanted to make it the National Championship and win it. We worked tirelessly on making sure that our mental was right, not just physical. And we all trust each other. We play hard for each other. We make extra plays for each other. We're going to do whatever we want for each other.

So just being able to make it this far and continuing to want to get more, it means a lot. Just means how much we've done together as a unit and how unselfish this team has been all year.

**Q. Yaxel, you just mentioned unselfishness. It seemed like during that 21-0 run the ball was really humming around and you guys were making extra passes. What goes into that and why is that what happens when you guys are moving the ball like that?**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: We start off every practice with Hibachi passing. That's pretty much the drill. We go out there, we make the right pass. Like I was saying before, we're an unselfish group of guys. Nobody cares about their stats on this team. We don't have a best player on this team. We have a guy that's going to show up that night, we have a couple guys, it doesn't matter. We're going to go out there and do whatever we need to do to win.

And if it's making an extra pass, everybody on this team will make that extra pass for each other no matter what's going on.

**Q. Nimari, when you were up here two weeks ago, you said you guys wanted to go 3 for 3. How did you get over that disappointment and shift it to go 2 for 2 now?**

NIMARI BURNETT: By understanding that we had a lot to play for and that our goals were still pretty much ahead of us. And going 3 for 3, our mindset was to cut two more nets after the Big Ten championship, the regular season, and I didn't know that you could cut nets for the Final Four.

Basically we still have two more and then we've got the National Championship to go.

**Q. Nimari, you're a Chicago kid, born and raised, won a state championship at Morgan Park, played a big role in that championship as a freshman. What does it mean having this moment in the UC and where does it rank for you in your basketball career?**

NIMARI BURNETT: No offense to Morgan Park and that time as a state champion, but I'm going to have to put this one No. 1. But also understanding that those moments have led me to this exact moment and understanding what



it takes to win, and so I cherish that moment when I was younger and helping the team win and doing it on a big stage.

But I don't think this stage -- it doesn't get any better than this stage.

**Q. For all the players, coming into the matchup, Elliott Cadeau was I want to say six assists away from a career milestone of 1,000 and I believe he was, I want to say, three or four points away from 600 assists and 1,000 points. Speak on his performance and how you feel about his performance throughout this tournament so far.**

NIMARI BURNETT: He just sets the pace and the tone of the game. Even prior to the game, his mentality and getting us all pumped up, just giving us the right juice that we all individually and as a team need to go out there and play a good brand of basketball. But also just being a game manager, making sure that we're all in the right spots.

He sees things that we don't even see ourselves. So super unselfish guy, so the success that he has, he deserves it and more.

**Q. Dusty, when they were cutting down the nets, I noticed you watching them. What's going through your mind as you see those guys climbing the ladder?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, I know how much of a sacrifice that our families have made for us to chase our dreams and do what we love. They're playing a child's game. I'm coaching a child's game. So when you look, in one spot are all these people that have poured into them, their old coaches, whoever the case, that have supported them and poured into them, their parents, who have made countless sacrifices for them to have this opportunity. It's just rewarding to see these moments where everyone is together.

So yeah, that's it. I've been here before. It's just, man, this is really cool seeing all these people that have accepted us get to where we are that don't get a chance to celebrate in the locker rooms like we do, to have the bus trips and plane rides and all the experiences we share together. So when we do have a chance to share this experience, it's just really cool to see.

I'd highly recommend next year's team doing it, also.  
(Laughter).

**Q. You guys have preached just how much team chemistry, team bonding is important to you, has been**

**such a key factor, whether it be a trip up north or TikTok lives. How much has that propelled you to the Final Four and how much has the team become a family?**

YAXEL LENDEBORG: Oh, man, from day one, the vets, Will, Nimari, L.J., Roddy, those guys pretty much tucked us under their wing and showed us the Michigan way. Nobody had any secret motives, nobody tried to beat anybody out from day one. And it pretty much set the standard for how Michigan is going to be this year.

When we went up there and went on that team vacation, it was awesome. I was pretty much the only guy in Shelter, playing the video games into the morning. I remember Will and Oscar were going to the lake and I was up still playing 2K at 6:00 in the morning. It was an interesting moment, they finally got to see me in my element. But, man, it was really fun.

Then just all the road trips, man. We started playing Among Us as of recent. It's awesome. We're all being super childish having fun not letting the noise bother us, just playing our hearts out for each other.

**Q. Dusty, about Yaxel, the country is seeing his personality over these last few weeks, and it seems like his spirit is something that's a little different than other guys on the team. I'm curious how you would describe it and how he and you have harnessed it to what we're seeing out there?**

DUSTY MAY: Well, we've challenged Yax to think about how he's perceived. You hate to be like that because he's so authentic and he has such a big heart and you want that to shine. But also, too, I think one of the really cool things about this group is that we've all kind of accepted where we are at that moment or where we were at the moment we got together.

And we didn't expect Yax to have the best practice habits because once he got here, he didn't have them. But we also tried to pull every single day and just get him a little bit closer, and we didn't judge him. We didn't judge Will, we didn't judge Nimari for where they were in their journey. Everyone simply tired to support each other instead of criticizing or whatever the case.

Look, on every team you could go down the line -- and we all have strengths and we all have weaknesses. And we're going to live in our strengths, but we're also going to try to help each other with our weaknesses. As humans we have personality flaws that we can get better at. When you know someone loves you and cares about you and they criticize or try to fix you, you know it's coming from a great

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

place.

I know our guys any time they've had anything go on in their life, anyone giving them advice, friendship, whatever the case is, out of the right place, which is to help them be the best they can be.

**Q. Coach, Michigan has made the Final Four at least once in six out of the last seven decades, nine overall. Can you speak to this elite program that you're leading and what this milestone means in Michigan history?**

DUSTY MAY: Yeah, obviously the brand of Michigan as a university is world renowned. And as a basketball program, I was speaking with -- gosh, I can't remember, one of the media guys about the -- I think it was Kevin Westwood, what you remember as a kid. And he started asking me the first teams I remember, and the '89 Michigan team was one of the first times I remembered with Terry, who's with us now, and Rumeal and all those guys.

And then the Fab Five did as much culturally for our sport since I've since been alive as anyone other than MJ. So very, very grateful that all those people have poured in to allow us to represent Michigan, to have all the resources necessary to get here. And I think we're all carrying the flag for all those old guys. And when they come back in the summer, that's the worst part of having a program that has had multiple coaches that there's not one umbrella.

But we've tried to welcome all the different eras with open arms because they've laid the foundation for all of us to receive what we have.

**Q. Dusty, statistically speaking, this is one of the biggest turnarounds and fastest turnarounds from Michigan two seasons ago to now. I know you didn't necessarily come in like the coach at your alma mater and say "I win. Google me," but did you have a message with this team to invigorate it?**

DUSTY MAY: We felt like once we got these guys to stay and we added the pieces that we did in the portal that we had a chance to be good, and a lot has to go right.

But no, it was more along the lines, let's get the guys in here that we can lose with, and if we're not good, then we're going to be building towards something great and they're going to be foundational pieces, and that's what we did. Just like we have this year, we have a group that personally I could have lost with these guys.

I didn't think we would because we're so talented. But if we did, I wouldn't feel much less about them. I would feel guilty we didn't give them the experiences that they

deserve. But for the most part, this is a group that you can lose with because of all the other attributes they bring to the table. But obviously when you have the talent we have, you're not going to lose much as long as they stay connected.

**Q. For coach, what do you think flipped around that 11-minute mark that allowed a 21-0 run to start?**

DUSTY MAY: The game got loosened up, and I want to give our staff a lot of credit. They managed the foul trouble and the minutes as well as we have all year. That was a big part of it. With 'Rez and Aday having two fouls each, we could have gotten out of our rotation, could have gotten out of rhythm, and those guys came back in, we stayed in our rotations, and more than anything else, I think the beautiful brand of basketball we were playing became contagious. You could see these guys feeding off of each other.

When you have the big-time stop and four guys block out, one guy gets a rebound, then you lead the break, and all five guys have a big, big part in beautiful basketball, it just feels so much greater for all of us, and that became contagious, it became energizing, and then it became a snowball that just kept going.

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